

Letter from Westminster



**Winchester MP:
Steve Brine**

WRITING in 2016, outlining why I intended to vote Remain in the EU referendum, I said life inside the EU wasn't perfect and life outside certainly wouldn't be either.

Unsurprisingly, I have not changed that view.

I regret the national vote to

leave but I fully respect it and that's not a "Brexit u-turn", it's accepting the result.

Over the past couple of weeks, since the Prime Minister first presented the draft Withdrawal Agreement, I have heard from hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents.

Of course, there remain extreme views at either end of the debate - and a still divided country - but my sense is a quiet majority who want this done. Here's why I think this is the right deal, and the right time, to do that.

The referendum was close-run and a very large part of the problem ever since has been deciphering what 17.4 million people wanted and finding the common threads; a surely impossible task.

My take on the deal is that, remarkably, it draws those threads together. It secures the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and UK nationals living in the EU.

It agrees the terms of a time-limited implementation period (which business desperately needs) and a fair financial settlement because this is a country that meets its international obligations.

It creates a free trade area for goods, reaches common ground on a close relationship on services and investment, including financial services, which are of great interest to many of my constituents.

It ensures we will control our own borders and end free movement, that we will no longer send vast sums of money to the EU - so we can spend more on our priorities like the NHS - and are able to strike free trade deals around the world.

We will take back control of our laws, ending the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, we will keep people safe against crime, terrorism and other threats by working closely with Europe and we will protect the integrity of our United Kingdom.

I have consistently made clear that I would support a deal that respects the referendum result while putting practical reality for our economy and our country over ideology. This deal does that in my opinion.

Whatever your view of what our future relationship should be with the EU, there is no escaping the need for a legally operative Northern Ireland backstop in the short-term. The EU have been consistent and clear on this. No backstop, no deal and I for one do not want no deal. I know there is great concern about the backstop so I am actively discussing it with No.10 and the Attorney General.

I think our PM deserves my support and that is MY view arrived at all by myself, not because I am a Minister. Politics is the art of the possible and Brexit was always going to be a compromise. You cannot leave the club and have the exact same benefits.

I am convinced that the agreement is the best that we can negotiate and I will support it on December 11. In the event the House of Commons cannot resolve this, it is right to keep all options - and all course of action - on the table.

29/11/18